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Research Article

# Legal Awareness, Crime Prevention, and Cybersecurity Knowledge among High School and Higher Secondary Students in Aizawl, Mizoram

**C Vanlalpeki*, Juliet F Lalzarzoliani**

Department of Economics, Faculty of Management, The ICFAI University Mizoram, Durtlang North, Aizawl, Mizoram-796025, India.

***Correspondence**
C Vanlalpeki
**Email:** pekichhk@gmail.com

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## Abstract

This study investigates the levels of legal awareness, crime prevention, and cybersecurity knowledge among high school and higher secondary students in Aizawl, Mizoram, India. It is based on a cross-sectional survey of 152 students from three educational institutions, selected through convenience sampling. The results indicate moderate awareness across all domains, with stronger performance in cybersecurity and case-based applications. Female and higher secondary students demonstrated significantly stronger knowledge and analytical skills, particularly in understanding legal rights and interpreting cases. In contrast, academic stream and socio-economic status showed no statistically significant influence. The findings underscore existing gaps in legal awareness and highlight the need for curriculum-integrated, gender-sensitive education to enhance digital and civic literacy among adolescents. These results provide new insights into youth legal and cybersecurity awareness in developing regions and emphasize the importance of early, inclusive education to foster informed civic participation and effective crime prevention in the digital age.

## Keywords

Legal Awareness, Crime Prevention, Cybersecurity, High School Students, Secondary Students, Gender Differences, Socio-Economic Factors, Mizoram.

## 1. Introduction

Crime, in its many forms, remains one of the utmost pressing socio-economic issues facing society today. From traditional offences such as theft and murder to emerging threats such as cybercrime, the complexity and impact of crime have evolved significantly, particularly in the Indian context. As society becomes increasingly digitised and interconnected, the nature of crime continues to shift, requiring more nuanced, informed, and proactive responses from both institutions and individuals. The recent increase in crime rates across India, especially in urban areas, highlights the influence of systemic inequalities, socio-economic pressures, and technological advancement on criminal behaviour (Hazra, 2020; Sengupta & Mukherjee, 2018).

Mizoram, a state in Northeast India, offers a unique context for examining contemporary crime patterns. While its overall crime rate is lower than the national average, its geographic location bordering Myanmar and Bangladesh places it at a crossroads of regional and international crime networks. The state's proximity to the Golden Triangle, known for its involvement in drug production and trafficking, along with its socio-cultural composition and young demographic, con

tributes to vulnerabilities in areas such as narcotics, cybercrime, and property-related offences (Murmu, 2023; Mizoram Police, n.d.).

Despite these vulnerabilities, there is a noticeable lack of empirical research focused on the awareness levels of youth in Mizoram regarding crime, legal rights, and cyber safety. While national campaigns and broader studies have addressed these issues to some extent, localised insights into how students in Mizoram perceive and understand these topics remain scarce. This gap is especially relevant in light of the recent legal reforms in India, which include the implementation of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam. These new laws supersede the Indian Penal Code of 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898, and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872. Understanding how well students are adapting to these legislative changes is vital (Mallick, 2024).

The rapid digitalisation of society has made children and adolescents increasingly connected to the internet, with worldwide estimates indicating that one in three internet users is under 18 years old, and youth aged 15–24 being the most connected group (UNICEF, 2017). While access to digital technologies offers educational and social opportunities, it also exposes students to cyber risks, including online crime, privacy violations, and misinformation. In India, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has emphasised the importance of cyber safety and legal awareness across educational levels. Elementary students (Grades 1–8) are introduced to basic digital literacy and safe online practices, secondary students (Grades 9–10) learn about cyber hygiene, cybercrime, and digital responsibility (NCERT, n.d.-a), and senior secondary students (Grades 11–12) receive guidance on cyber laws and legal implications of online actions (NCERT, n.d.-b). These initiatives underscore the need for structured cybersecurity and legal education to be incorporated into school curricula. The present study examines students' awareness and understanding of cybercrime, their legal rights, and preventive measures, aiming to identify gaps and inform strategies for enhancing cyber literacy and promoting responsible online behaviour.

Awareness and knowledge of legal rights and cyber safety play a key role in preventing crime, particularly among young people. Students represent a substantial proportion of digital technology users and are particularly vulnerable to cyber threats. However, awareness alone does not always lead to preventive behaviour, and considerable gaps remain in students' understanding of legal frameworks, reporting mechanisms, and cybersecurity protocols (Verma & Kushwaha, 2021; Nghilhlova Zote, Sur Roy, & Longkumer, 2023). These gaps may vary according to factors such as gender, academic stream, and socio-economic background.

Although national campaigns and school-based interventions have aimed to increase awareness of legal and digital issues, empirical studies focusing on actual knowledge levels among students in Mizoram remain scarce. This study focuses on secondary school students in Mizoram and investigates how their demographic characteristics influence their understanding of crime, legal rights, and cybersecurity. The study further investigates whether students' level of education, high school or higher secondary school, shapes their awareness and understanding of crime-related information. The findings aim to inform context-specific and youth-centred educational policies and crime prevention programs.

This paper sheds light on students' understanding of crime and law, and how this knowledge shapes their attitudes and behaviours. In today's increasingly digital world, where laws and social norms are constantly evolving, giving young people the right awareness is key to building a safer, more informed society.

## 2. Literature Review

Studies have shown that young people's perceptions and behaviour are strongly shaped by their awareness of crime, exposure to prevention strategies, and media consumption. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, n.d.) emphasises the importance of education in preventing youth involvement in crime by equipping young people with knowledge and values that reduce their risk of victimisation or offending. Likewise, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, n.d.) identifies early prevention efforts, such as youth engagement, skills training, and sport-based interventions, as effective means to reduce delinquency, violence, and radicalisation while empowering youth as positive community agents. Mensah (2024) found that crime prevention education in Ghanaian high schools improved students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours, although resource limitations and contextual gaps hindered its full effectiveness. Cook, Gottfredson, and Na (2010) emphasised that school-based interventions promoting self-control and fair disciplinary practices effectively reduce youth-related crimes, including bullying and vandalism. Cheung and Jia (2024) surveyed 883 young people in Hong Kong and found that greater awareness of national security

enforcement and adherence to lawful behaviour were associated with lower levels of radicalism. However, this effect was somewhat reduced among those with higher education or stronger commitment to legal norms, indicating situational deterrence. Weintrobe (2024) analysed intergenerational conversations in the UK and revealed that while youth were deeply aware of and emotionally affected by the climate crisis, elders vacillated between denial and acknowledgement, with feelings of guilt and being silenced shaping the dialogue and underscoring the need for supportive spaces where youth can process climate realities. Finally, Mathungeni (2024) identified family-related factors contributing to youth crime in South African high schools, including parental absence, poor parenting, abuse, poverty, divorce, and family size, recommending coordinated efforts among families, community leaders, educators, law enforcement, and government agencies to combat youth crime effectively.

Several key frameworks underpin India's cybersecurity architecture. The Information Technology Act 2000 provides the legal basis for electronic governance, digital transactions, and cybercrime regulation (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, 2000). The National Cyber Security Policy outlines a vision for a "secure and resilient cyberspace" that encompasses citizens, businesses, and the government, with objectives including capacity-building, public-private partnerships, protection of critical information infrastructure, and institutional coordination (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, 2013). More recently, the draft National Cybersecurity Strategy addresses emerging threats, emphasises cyber-resilience, international co-operation, and sector-specific responses (Data Security Council of India, 2020). While these frameworks provide a structured approach and align public-private efforts, implementation remains a challenge due to issues with stakeholder coordination, resource constraints, and the rapid pace of technological advancements.

Alhadidi, Nweiran, and Hilal (2024) examined the impact of cybercrime and legal awareness on student behaviour at the University of Jordan and found a strong link between students' legal awareness and their involvement in illicit online activities, with gender and other factors influencing engagement levels. Similarly, Almansoori et al. (2021) analysed cybercrime on social media, revealing that individuals aged 20–25 and those with lower educational levels are more prone to committing such offences, underscoring the need for targeted awareness and policing strategies. Among university students in Saudi Arabia, Alsharif et al. (2024) found that social media use and cybercrime posed challenges to intellectual security, emphasising the importance of societal roles and open dialogue to enhance awareness. Arpaci and Aslan (2022) introduced a scale to measure users' awareness of online threats on social media, called the Cybercrime Awareness on Social Media Scale (CASM-S), and confirmed its reliability and validity. Kaur et al. (2024) reviewed the dual nature of social media, highlighting its role in both communication and cybersecurity risks, such as phishing and identity theft, and recommended preventive measures, including privacy protection, user education, and encryption. Broader studies (Amosun et al., 2015; Lesjak et al., 2019; Zulkifli et al., 2020) have consistently found that education improves cyber awareness, although behavioural gaps persist.

In contrast, Verma and Kushwaha (2021) observed no gender differences in cybercrime awareness among Indian students. In the Indian context, Hazra (2021) linked juvenile delinquency to poverty, domestic violence, and lack of education, with police density paradoxically correlating with higher juvenile crime rates. Supporting this, Lambert et al. (2011, 2012) and Pasupuleti et al. (2009) noted a more substantial reliance on informal institutions, such as family and peers, over formal justice systems. Chockalingam and Srinivasan (2009) found that variations in the fear of victimisation were shaped by gender, age, and residence. Previous research highlights that youth engagement in crime, both offline and online, is strongly influenced by awareness, education, and socio-cultural context. Crime prevention education, whether delivered through schools, family, and community interventions, can improve knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours; however, its effectiveness is shaped by resources, parenting styles, and local norms. Similarly, cybercrime studies emphasise the need for digital literacy and legal awareness, as students' involvement in online offences is moderated by education, gender, and social factors. Broader research further highlights that socio-economic deprivation, domestic challenges, and cultural norms significantly shape youth crime patterns. Collectively, these studies underscore the importance of contextualised, age-appropriate crime education, robust cyber-literacy programs, and the integration of formal and informal crime control strategies tailored to local socio-economic realities.

## 3. Methodology

### *3.1. Selection of the Study Area*

The study was conducted in Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram, India, which serves as a strategic urban centre experiencing significant demographic and technological transformation. Aizawl's rapid urbanisation, increased digital connectivity, and exposure to both traditional and emerging crime forms made it an ideal site for this research. High school and

higher secondary school students were selected as the target population, as they represent a demographic that is developmentally poised to form critical understandings of social and legal systems and are among the most active users of digital technology, making them particularly susceptible to and relevant for crime- and cybersecurity-related studies.

### *3.2. Profile of the Study Area*

Aizawl, located in northern Mizoram, North-East India, is situated at an elevation of approximately 1,132 meters (3,715 feet) above sea level. According to the 2011 Census, the city has a population of 293,416, a gender-balanced demographic, and a high literacy rate exceeding 98%. The city is home to a diverse range of educational institutions, including government and private schools, with the majority affiliated with the Mizoram Board of School Education (MBSE) and a smaller number affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). Data from the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) 2021–2022 report that 40,354 students are enrolled in high schools across Mizoram and 26,533 in higher secondary schools. As of November 2024, Aizawl comprises 37 high schools and 25 higher secondary schools.

### *3.3. Research Design*

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design using a quantitative approach to examine the target population. It focused on measuring students' knowledge and awareness across seven key domains: types and impacts of crime, crime prevention, legal rights, laws and their preventive roles, case-based applications, and cybersecurity awareness.

### *3.4. Data Collection Instruments*

A structured, domain-specific test was developed to assess theoretical knowledge and applied understanding. The instrument was divided into three sections:

(a) Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQs): Tested foundational knowledge across crime, law, and cybersecurity.
(b) Case Study Application Questions: Assessed practical application of knowledge in brief scenarios.
(c) Case Study (In-Depth) Questions: Evaluated critical thinking and problem-solving in complex crime situations.

Each correct response was awarded one mark, resulting in a total possible score of 40, distributed across seven domains, as detailed in Table 1. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, both for individual sections and for the overall scale. The questionnaire consisted of 40 multiple-choice items divided into seven sections: *Knowledge of Crime, Crime Prevention Awareness, Knowledge of Legal Rights and Crime Reporting, Understanding Specific Laws and Crime Prevention in India, Case Studies – Applying Knowledge to Real Situations, Cybersecurity Awareness,* and *Case Study.*

Since the items were scored dichotomously (1 for correct, 0 for incorrect), Cronbach's Alpha in this context is equivalent to the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20), which is appropriate for binary (right/wrong) data. The overall Cronbach's Alpha for the 40-item questionnaire was 0.331, indicating low internal consistency. At the section level, reliability varied: Cybersecurity Awareness ($\alpha = 0.385$) and Knowledge of Crime ($\alpha = 0.353$) demonstrated the highest internal consistency, while sections such as Understanding Specific Laws and Crime Prevention in India ($\alpha = -1.521$) and Crime Prevention Awareness ($\alpha = -0.371$) showed negative alpha values, suggesting that items in these sections may not be measuring a single, coherent construct effectively.

These findings may be influenced by several factors, including the fact that most sections included only five items, the variety of subtopics covered, and the focus on knowledge-based questions rather than attitudinal measures. Despite these limitations, the questionnaire provided valuable insights into students' awareness levels. Future studies should consider revising and expanding the questionnaire to improve its reliability.

**Table 1:** Section-Wise Internal Consistency of the Questionnaire (Cronbach's Alpha)

| Section Title | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge Of Crime** | 5 | 0.353 |
| **Crime Prevention Awareness** | 5 | -0.371 |
| **Knowledge Of Legal Rights and Crime Reporting** | 5 | 0.258 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Understanding Specific Laws and Crime Prevention in India** | 5 | -1.521 |
| **Case Studies - Applying Knowledge to Real Situations** | 5 | -0.212 |
| **Cybersecurity Awareness** | 10 | 0.385 |
| **Case Study** | 5 | -0.172 |
| **Total** | 40 | 0.331 |

### *3.5. Data Sources*

Primary data were collected through questionnaires from students in three purposively selected schools in Aizawl between February 7 and 14, 2025. The questionnaires were prepared in English, as all the schools were English-medium institutions, ensuring clarity and consistency for all respondents

### *3.6. Sampling Framework*

The study employed a multi-stage sampling strategy. Schools were purposively selected based on prior administrative approval and logistical feasibility. Within these schools, convenience sampling was used to select students, depending on their availability and willingness to participate (Table 2.).

1. Ar-Ells School: 42 respondents (Classes 11–12, Science stream),
2. Aizawl Christian Academy: 40 respondents (Classes 9–12, all streams),
3. Providence Higher Secondary School: 70 respondents (Classes 9–12, Arts and Commerce)

**Table 2:** Distribution of Sample by School

| Name of School | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|
| **1) Ar-Ells School** | 42 |
| **2) Aizawl Christian Academy** | 40 |
| **3) Providence Higher Secondary School** | 70 |
| **Total** | **152** |

### *3.7. Ethical Considerations*

The study obtained ethical approval and institutional permissions before beginning data collection. It secured consent from each school's principal and warden, and briefed respondents on the study's objectives before obtaining their informed consent. The study assured respondents of confidentiality and clearly stated that participation was entirely voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without any consequences. It collected no personally identifiable information and used all data exclusively for academic purposes.

### *3.8. Data Analysis Procedures*

Data analysis was carried out using Microsoft Excel 2019, IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26), and Numiqo (Umiqo Team, 2025). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise the data. Inferential statistical tests, such as Spearman's rank-order correlation, the Mann–Whitney U test, and the Kruskal–Wallis test, were employed to examine relationships and differences among groups.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### *4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

Table 3. shows that female students comprise a slight majority (52%) compared to males (48%). Most respondents are aged 15–17 (49.4%), followed by those aged 18–19 (45.4%), and with the smallest group aged 20–21 (5.3%). The ma-

jority enrolled in Class 12 (46.1%), mainly from the Arts stream (45.4%), while students from the Commerce stream form the smallest group (7.9%). Over half of the students reside in on-campus hostels (54.6%), while the remainder lives with their families (36.2%) or in rented accommodation (7.9%). Academically, most students achieved Grade A (28.9%) or B (21.7%) in their latest exams, with only a few attaining outstanding performance (7.2%). In terms of birth order, 34.2% are first-born, 32.2% are the youngest, 29.6% are middle-born, and 3.9% are only children.

**Table 3:** Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

| Variable | Characteristic | n | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | Female | 79 | 51.97 |
| | Male | 73 | 48.03 |
| **Age Group** | 15–17 years | 75 | 49.34 |
| | 18–19 years | 69 | 45.39 |
| | 20–21 years | 8 | 5.26 |
| **Current Educational Level (Class)** | Class 9 | 6 | 3.95 |
| | Class 10 | 40 | 26.32 |
| | Class 11 | 36 | 23.68 |
| | Class 12 | 70 | 46.05 |
| **Academic Stream** | General | 39 | 25.66 |
| | Arts | 69 | 45.39 |
| | Science | 32 | 21.05 |
| | Commerce | 12 | 7.89 |
| **Current Living Arrangement** | On-campus hostel | 83 | 54.61 |
| | Rented accommodation | 12 | 7.89 |
| | Living with family | 55 | 36.18 |
| | Living with relatives | 2 | 1.32 |
| **Academic Grade Achieved** | Grade O | 11 | 7.24 |
| | Grade A+ | 20 | 13.16 |
| | Grade A | 44 | 28.95 |
| | Grade B+ | 18 | 11.84 |
| | Grade B | 33 | 21.71 |
| | Grade C | 25 | 16.45 |
| **Birth Order in Family** | First-born | 52 | 34.21 |
| | Middle child | 45 | 29.61 |
| | Only child | 6 | 3.95 |
| | Youngest | 49 | 32.24 |
| **Note. N = 152 respondents. Percentages are based on the total sample.** | | | |

### *4.2. Parental Information and Socio-Economic Status of Respondents*

Table 4. shows that most respondents' fathers had completed at least high school or higher secondary education (46.05%). About 15.79% of fathers held a bachelor's degree, while 8.55% possessed postgraduate or professional qualifications. In terms of occupation, fathers were self-employed primarily (35.53%) or employed in government positions (26.97%). Mothers displayed a similar educational trend, with the majority completing high school or higher secondary education (51.97%) and smaller proportions attaining higher degrees. Regarding occupation, most mothers were homemakers (26.97%) or self-employed (23.68%), followed by government employees (20.39%). As for socio-economic status, the majority of households reported monthly incomes between ₹10,001 and ₹75,000, reflecting a lower-middle to middle-income background, while a smaller fraction belonged to higher-income brackets.

**Table 4:** Parental Background and Socio-Economic Status of the Respondents

| Variables | Characteristic | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Father's Educational Level** | Less than high school | 30 | 19.74 |
| | High school | 34 | 22.37 |
| | Higher Secondary | 36 | 23.68 |
| | Associate/community college degree | 9 | 5.92 |
| | Bachelor's degree | 24 | 15.79 |
| | Master's, doctorate, or professional degree | 13 | 8.55 |
| **Mother's Educational Level** | Less than high school | 37 | 24.34 |
| | High school | 37 | 24.34 |
| | Higher Secondary | 42 | 27.63 |
| | Associate/community college degree | 6 | 3.95 |
| | Bachelor's degree | 19 | 12.5 |
| | Master's, doctorate, or professional degree | 9 | 5.92 |
| **Father's Occupation** | Doctor | 2 | 1.32 |
| | Farmer | 1 | 0.66 |
| | Government employee | 41 | 26.97 |
| | Private employee | 27 | 17.76 |
| | Retired | 18 | 11.84 |
| | Self-employed | 54 | 35.53 |
| | Unemployed | 4 | 2.63 |
| **Mother's Occupation** | Farmer | 1 | 0.66 |
| | Government employee | 31 | 20.39 |
| | Homemaker | 41 | 26.97 |
| | Nurse | 1 | 0.66 |
| | Private employee | 17 | 11.18 |
| | Retired | 9 | 5.92 |
| | Self-employed | 36 | 23.68 |
| | Unemployed | 14 | 9.21 |
| **Socio-Economic Status** | Below ₹10,000 | 10 | 6.58 |
| | ₹10,001-20,000 | 34 | 22.37 |
| | ₹20,001-40,000 | 34 | 22.37 |
| | ₹40,001-75,000 | 34 | 22.37 |
| | ₹75,001-1,50,000 | 22 | 14.47 |
| | ₹1,50,001-3,00,000 | 12 | 7.89 |
| | ₹3,00,001 and above | 5 | 3.29 |
| **Note. N = 152 respondents. Percentages are based on the total sample.** | | | |

### *4.3. Descriptive Statistics of Crime Awareness and Legal Knowledge among the Respondents*

Table 5. shows that respondents demonstrated varying levels of knowledge and awareness across multiple crime-related and legal domains.

The Overall Knowledge Score ranged from 10 to 28, with a mean of 19.64 (SD = 3.79), indicating that respondents scored moderately on average across all assessed areas. When expressed as a percentage, the Overall Knowledge Percentage had a mean of 49.10% (SD = 9.48), suggesting that respondents correctly answered just under half of the total knowledge-based items.

Among the individual domains, Case Studies Application and Cybersecurity Awareness had the highest average raw scores (M = 3.03, SD = 1.01 and M = 4.53, SD = 1.83, respectively), indicating stronger understanding and engagement in these areas. This may reflect increased public exposure to digital safety topics or more practical engagement with real-world scenarios in educational settings.

In contrast, the lowest average scores were observed in Knowledge of Crime (M = 2.22, SD = 1.23) and the Case Study section (M = 2.21, SD = 1.33). This suggests limited familiarity with foundational crime concepts and lower ability to interpret or analyse crime-related case materials.

When converted to percentage scores, similar patterns emerged. The Case Studies Application domain had the highest mean percentage score at 60.66% (SD = 20.25), while Knowledge of Crime and Case Study showed the lowest percentage means (44.47% and 44.21%, respectively), reinforcing the pattern of weaker knowledge in these areas. These results suggest that while respondents demonstrate relatively higher awareness in applied and digital domains, there are notable knowledge gaps in foundational areas of crime and law.

**Table 5:** Descriptive Statistics for Respondents' Scores and Percentages across Crime and Legal Awareness Dimensions

| Variable | n | Range | Min | Max | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Raw Scores* | | | | | | |
| Knowledge of Crime | 152 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 2.22 | 1.23 |
| Crime Prevention Awareness | 152 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 2.65 | 0.75 |
| Knowledge of Legal Rights | 152 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 2.36 | 1.19 |
| Understanding Laws and Crime Prevention | 152 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 2.63 | 0.73 |
| Case Studies Application | 152 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 3.03 | 1.01 |
| Cybersecurity Awareness | 152 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 4.53 | 1.83 |
| Case Study | 152 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 2.21 | 1.33 |
| **Overall Knowledge Score** | **152** | **18** | **10** | **28** | **19.64** | **3.79** |
| *Percentage Scores* | | | | | | |
| Knowledge of Crime (%) | 152 | 100 | 0 | 100 | 44.47 | 24.60 |
| Crime Prevention Awareness (%) | 152 | 80 | 20 | 100 | 53.03 | 14.96 |
| Knowledge of Legal Rights (%) | 152 | 100 | 0 | 100 | 47.11 | 23.86 |
| Understanding Laws and Crime Prevention (%) | 152 | 80 | 0 | 80 | 52.63 | 14.68 |
| Case Studies Application (%) | 152 | 80 | 20 | 100 | 60.66 | 20.25 |
| Cybersecurity Awareness (%) | 152 | 100 | 0 | 100 | 45.33 | 18.34 |
| Case Study (%) | 152 | 100 | 0 | 100 | 44.21 | 26.51 |
| **Overall Knowledge Percentage (%)** | **152** | **45** | **25** | **70** | **49.10** | **9.48** |

### *4.4. Distribution of Respondents across Knowledge Levels in Crime and Legal Awareness*

Table 6. presents the distribution of respondents across high, average, and low levels of knowledge in various crime-related and legal awareness domains. A significant number of respondents demonstrated low knowledge in foundational areas: 62.50% of respondents scored low in Knowledge of Crime, and 53.29% in Knowledge of Legal Rights, revealing significant gaps in fundamental understanding of crime-related concepts and individual legal protections.

In contrast, performance was mainly stronger in more applied and contemporary domains. For example, Cybersecurity Awareness had the highest percentage of respondents in the average range (57.24%), and the Case Studies Application also had over half (55.92%) of respondents performing at an average level. These results suggest greater familiarity with digital safety and the practical application of legal knowledge.

The Case Study domain, which may reflect the ability to analyses and interpret specific crime scenarios, showed a more even spread, with 52.63% at the average level, 31.58% at the low level, and 15.79% at the high level. This suggests that

while most respondents were rationally competent, a smaller but significant group demonstrated stronger analytical abilities in cases related to crime. However, the fact that one-third of the scores are low also highlights the need to develop interpretive and critical thinking skills in this context.

Some domains had very few high performers, such as Understanding Laws and Crime Prevention, where only 7.24% of respondents achieved high scores. This is an area of concern, given its relevance to both legal literacy and community safety. Regarding the Overall Knowledge, just over half of the respondents (51.32%) fell within the average range, while 21.71% were classified as high and 26.97% as low. This overall distribution suggests a moderate level of general awareness, with room for improvement at both extremes.

**Table 6:** Frequency and Percentage of Respondents by Knowledge Level in Crime, Law, and Cybersecurity Domains

| Knowledge Area | Level | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge of Crime** | Average | 29 | 19.08 |
| | High | 28 | 18.42 |
| | Low | 95 | 62.50 |
| **Crime Prevention Awareness** | Average | 61 | 40.13 |
| | High | 20 | 13.16 |
| | Low | 71 | 46.71 |
| **Knowledge of Legal Rights** | Average | 48 | 31.58 |
| | High | 23 | 15.13 |
| | Low | 81 | 53.29 |
| **Understanding Laws and Crime Prevention** | Average | 84 | 55.26 |
| | High | 11 | 7.24 |
| | Low | 57 | 37.50 |
| **Case Studies Application** | Average | 85 | 55.92 |
| | High | 17 | 11.18 |
| | Low | 50 | 32.89 |
| **Cybersecurity Awareness** | Average | 87 | 57.24 |
| | High | 21 | 13.82 |
| | Low | 44 | 28.95 |
| **Case Study** | Average | 80 | 52.63 |
| | High | 24 | 15.79 |
| | Low | 48 | 31.58 |
| **Overall Knowledge** | Average | 78 | 51.32 |
| | High | 33 | 21.71 |
| | Low | 41 | 26.97 |
| **Note. N = 152 respondents. Percentages are based on the total sample.** | | | |

In summary, while respondents demonstrated competence in applied and digital areas, such as cybersecurity and case studies, their knowledge of core crime concepts, legal rights, and preventive law remains limited. This highlights a clear opportunity for targeted educational efforts to build foundational knowledge alongside critical thinking and case analysis skills.

### *4.5. Correlation between Crime Knowledge, Awareness Domains, and Age*

Table 7. Presents Spearman's rho correlations examining the relationships between respondents' knowledge across various crimes and legal domains and their age.

Spearman's rho correlations were computed to examine the relationships among knowledge of crime, understanding of laws, cybersecurity awareness, and case study performance. Knowledge of crime demonstrated weak but significant positive correlations with understanding of laws ($\rho = .195$, $p < .05$), cybersecurity awareness ($\rho = .178$, $p < .05$), and

case study performance (ρ = .206, p < .05). Additionally, crime prevention awareness correlated weakly with knowledge of legal rights (ρ = .170, p < .05). Age did not show significant correlations with any of the knowledge variables (all p > .05), indicating that it did not influence respondents' performance across domains.

**Table 7:** Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficients between Crime Knowledge, Legal Awareness, and Age

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Knowledge of Crime | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 2. Crime Prevention Awareness | 0.085 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 3. Knowledge of Legal Rights | 0.031 | .170* | 1 | | | | | |
| 4. Understanding Laws & Crime Prevention | .195* | -0.027 | 0.07 | 1 | | | | |
| 5. Case Studies Application | -0.019 | 0.005 | 0.064 | 0.056 | 1 | | | |
| 6. Cybersecurity Awareness | .178* | -0.027 | 0.064 | 0.105 | -0.036 | 1 | | |
| 7. Case Study | .206* | -0.013 | 0.121 | -0.067 | -0.047 | 0.147 | 1 | |
| 8. Age | 0.152 | -0.028 | 0.022 | -0.113 | 0.083 | -0.03 | 0.112 | 1 |
| *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | | | |

These results indicate that respondents with greater knowledge of crime were also more likely to show higher levels of understanding in laws and crime prevention, cybersecurity awareness, and case study analysis. Although the correlations were statistically significant, they were weak in strength, implying that the relationships are meaningful but modest.

A significant, weak positive relationship was also found between crime prevention awareness and knowledge of legal rights, suggesting that these domains may develop together—possibly through similar sources of information or education.

No significant relationships were found between age and any knowledge area, indicating that respondents' levels of crime and legal knowledge were not influenced by their age. This suggests that awareness and understanding in these domains may be more closely related to factors such as education, experience, or exposure rather than age alone.

In summary, while the significant correlations highlight a network of interconnected knowledge areas, the overall weak strength of the associations suggests that targeted interventions in specific domains, such as legal rights or cybersecurity, may still need to be addressed independently. The lack of age-related differences also implies that such interventions could be effective across age groups.

### *4.6. Comparison of Knowledge Dimensions across Socio-Economic Status (SES) Groups*

Table 8. and Figure 1. present the results of a series of Kruskal–Wallis tests conducted to examine whether there were statistically significant differences in knowledge and awareness scores across respondents from three socio-economic status (SES) groups: Low, Medium, and High.

*Knowledge of Crime:* A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed on Knowledge of Crime scores across the three SES groups. The mean ranks were 81.46 (Low SES), 75.21 (Medium SES), and 70.42 (High SES), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, n = 152) = 1.089$, $p = .580$.

*Crime Prevention Awareness:* A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed on Crime Prevention Awareness scores across the three SES groups. The mean ranks were 79.71 (Low SES), 71.96 (Medium SES), and 89.53 (High SES), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, n = 152) = 3.357$, $p = .187$.

*Knowledge of Legal Rights:* A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed on Knowledge of Legal Rights scores across the three SES groups. The mean ranks were 76.51 (Low SES), 77.70 (Medium SES), and 70.97 (High SES), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, n = 152) = 0.391$, $p = .823$.

**Table 8:** Kruskal–Wallis Test Results Comparing Knowledge Dimensions Across SES Groups (Low, Medium, High)

| Variable | SES Group | n | Mean Rank | $\chi^2$ (2) | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge of Crime** | Low | 46 | 81.46 | 1.089 | 0.58 |
| | Medium | 87 | 75.21 | | |
| | High | 19 | 70.42 | | |
| **Crime Prevention Awareness** | Low | 46 | 79.71 | 3.357 | 0.187 |
| | Medium | 87 | 71.96 | | |
| | High | 19 | 89.53 | | |
| **Knowledge of Legal Rights** | Low | 46 | 76.51 | 0.391 | 0.823 |
| | Medium | 87 | 77.7 | | |
| | High | 19 | 70.97 | | |
| **Understanding Laws & Crime Prevention** | Low | 46 | 80.75 | 0.975 | 0.614 |
| | Medium | 87 | 73.85 | | |
| | High | 19 | 78.34 | | |
| **Case Studies Application** | Low | 46 | 73.28 | 0.574 | 0.751 |
| | Medium | 87 | 77.08 | | |
| | High | 19 | 81.63 | | |
| **Cybersecurity Awareness** | Low | 46 | 81.78 | 1.47 | 0.48 |
| | Medium | 87 | 75.59 | | |
| | High | 19 | 67.89 | | |
| **Case Study Score** | Low | 46 | 80.93 | 2.143 | 0.343 |
| | Medium | 87 | 76.91 | | |
| | High | 19 | 63.87 | | |
| **Note. Kruskal-Wallis H tests were conducted for each variable. Degrees of freedom for all tests = 2. No significant differences were found across SES groups ($p > .05$ for all comparisons). SES = Socio-Economic Status.** | | | | | |

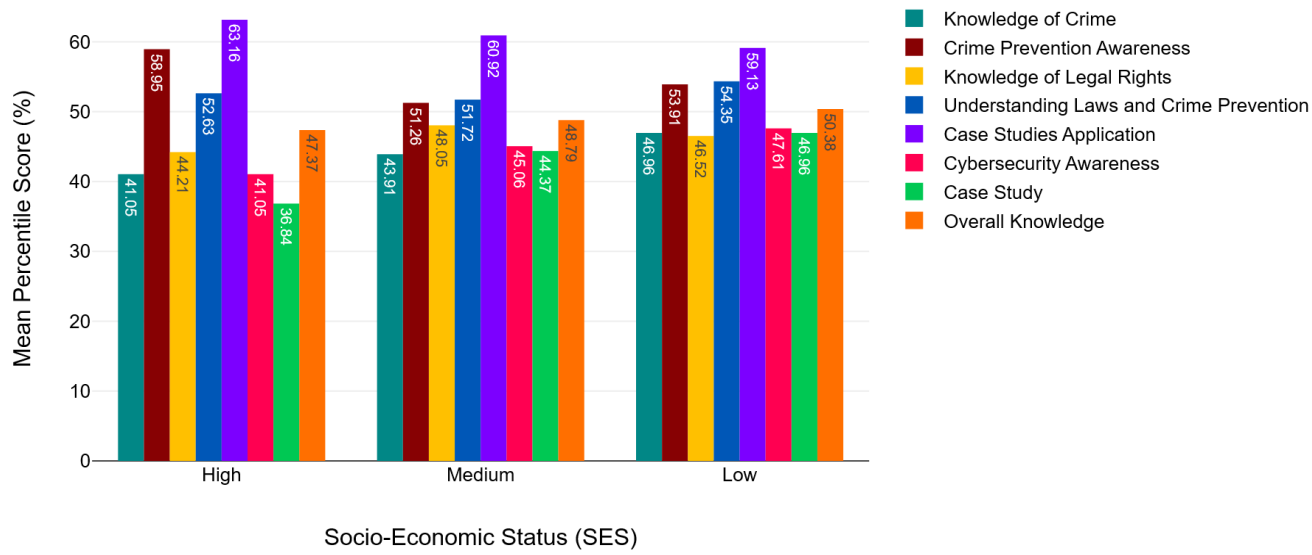
*Understanding Laws and Crime Prevention:* A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed on Understanding Laws and Crime Prevention scores across the three SES groups. The mean ranks were 80.75 (Low SES), 73.85 (Medium SES), and 78.34 (High SES), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, n = 152) = 0.975$, $p = .614$.

*Case Studies Application:* A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed on Case Studies Application scores across the three SES groups. The mean ranks were 73.28 (Low SES), 77.08 (Medium SES), and 81.63 (High SES), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, n = 152) = 0.574$, $p = .751$.

*Cybersecurity Awareness:* A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed on Cybersecurity Awareness scores across the three SES groups. The mean ranks were 81.78 (Low SES), 75.59 (Medium SES), and 67.89 (High SES), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, n = 152) = 1.470$, $p = .480$.

*Case Study Score:* A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed on Case Study scores across the three SES groups. The mean ranks were 80.93 (Low SES), 76.91 (Medium SES), and 63.87 (High SES), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, n = 152) = 2.143$, $p = .343$.

**Figure 1:** Socio-Economic Status–Wise Mean Percentile Scores Across Crime and Legal Awareness Areas




The results suggest that socio-economic status did not significantly influence respondents' knowledge or awareness levels in any of the measured areas. Whether a respondent came from a low, medium, or high SES background, their average scores across crime knowledge, legal rights, and cybersecurity awareness were relatively similar. This may reflect broad access to general information across different socio-economic groups, or it may suggest that the current sources of education and awareness are equally limited or effective across all economic backgrounds.

### *4.7. Comparison of Knowledge Dimensions across Academic Streams*

Table 9. shows that Kruskal–Wallis tests were conducted to evaluate whether respondents' scores on various knowledge dimensions differed significantly across the four academic streams (Commerce, Arts, General, and Science).

*Knowledge of Crime:* A Kruskal–Wallis test was performed on Knowledge of Crime scores across the four academic streams. The mean ranks were 66.88 (Commerce), 79.55 (Arts), 71.05 (General), and 80.17 (Science), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2$ (3, n = 152) = 1.841, p = .606.

*Crime Prevention Awareness:* A Kruskal–Wallis test was performed on Crime Prevention Awareness scores across the four academic streams. The mean ranks were 65.67 (Commerce), 78.13 (Arts), 81.69 (General), and 70.72 (Science), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2$(3, n = 152) = 2.270, p = .518.

*Knowledge of Legal Rights:* A Kruskal–Wallis test was performed on Knowledge of Legal Rights scores across the four academic streams. The mean ranks were 92.00 (Commerce), 71.33 (Arts), 77.03 (General), and 81.20 (Science), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2$(3, n = 152) = 3.016, p = .389.

**Table 9:** Kruskal–Wallis Test Results Comparing Knowledge Dimensions across Academic Streams (Commerce, Arts, General, and Science)

| Variable | Stream | n | Mean Rank | $\chi^2$ (3) | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge of Crime** | Commerce | 12 | 66.88 | 1.841 | 0.606 |
| | Arts | 69 | 79.55 | | |
| | General | 39 | 71.05 | | |
| | Science | 32 | 80.17 | | |
| **Crime Prevention Awareness** | Commerce | 12 | 65.67 | 2.27 | 0.518 |
| | Arts | 69 | 78.13 | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | General | 39 | 81.69 | | |
| | Science | 32 | 70.72 | | |
| **Knowledge of Legal Rights** | Commerce | 12 | 92 | 3.016 | 0.389 |
| | Arts | 69 | 71.33 | | |
| | General | 39 | 77.03 | | |
| | Science | 32 | 81.2 | | |
| **Understanding Laws & Crime Prevention** | Commerce | 12 | 75.75 | 1.71 | 0.635 |
| | Arts | 69 | 72.7 | | |
| | General | 39 | 77.69 | | |
| | Science | 32 | 83.53 | | |
| **Case Studies Application** | Commerce | 12 | 85.79 | 1.586 | 0.662 |
| | Arts | 69 | 72.81 | | |
| | General | 39 | 76.06 | | |
| | Science | 32 | 81.5 | | |
| **Cybersecurity Awareness** | Commerce | 12 | 63.42 | 2.387 | 0.496 |
| | Arts | 69 | 74.07 | | |
| | General | 39 | 78.56 | | |
| | Science | 32 | 84.13 | | |
| **Case Study** | Commerce | 12 | 65.42 | 5.372 | 0.147 |
| | Arts | 69 | 80.6 | | |
| | General | 39 | 65.42 | | |
| | Science | 32 | 85.31 | | |

**Note. Kruskal-Wallis H tests were used to examine differences across academic streams. Degrees of freedom (df) = 3 for all tests. No statistically significant differences were found across streams for any knowledge variable (p > .05 for all).**

*Understanding Laws and Crime Prevention:* A Kruskal–Wallis test was performed on Understanding Laws and Crime Prevention scores across the four academic streams. The mean ranks were 75.75 (Commerce), 72.70 (Arts), 77.69 (General), and 83.53 (Science), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(3, n = 152) = 1.710$, $p = .635$.

*Case Studies Application:* A Kruskal–Wallis test was performed on Case Studies Application scores across the four academic streams. The mean ranks were 85.79 (Commerce), 72.81 (Arts), 76.06 (General), and 81.50 (Science), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(3, n = 152) = 1.586$, $p = .662$.

*Cybersecurity Awareness:* A Kruskal–Wallis test was performed on Cybersecurity Awareness scores across the four academic streams. The mean ranks were 63.42 (Commerce), 74.07 (Arts), 78.56 (General), and 84.13 (Science), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(3, n = 152) = 2.387$, $p = .496$.

*Case Study Score:* A Kruskal–Wallis test was performed on Case Study scores across the four academic streams. The mean ranks were 65.42 (Commerce), 80.60 (Arts), 65.42 (General), and 85.31 (Science), but the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(3, n = 152) = 5.372$, $p = .147$.

Although some slight variations were observed in mean ranks (e.g., Science students tended to rank slightly higher in Understanding Laws and Cybersecurity Awareness, while Commerce students had the highest mean rank for Legal Rights), these differences were not significant enough to be statistically meaningful.

The result suggests that a student's academic stream did not have a significant impact on their performance in any of the assessed knowledge domains. The findings suggest that crime and legal knowledge, as well as awareness of cybersecurity and prevention strategies, may not be strongly influenced by formal academic tracks but rather by external sources of information, lived experience, or targeted educational efforts.

### *4.8. Comparison of Knowledge Dimensions by Course Level*

Table 10. Shows that Mann–Whitney U tests were conducted to evaluate whether respondents' scores on various knowledge dimensions differed significantly between High School and Higher Secondary students.

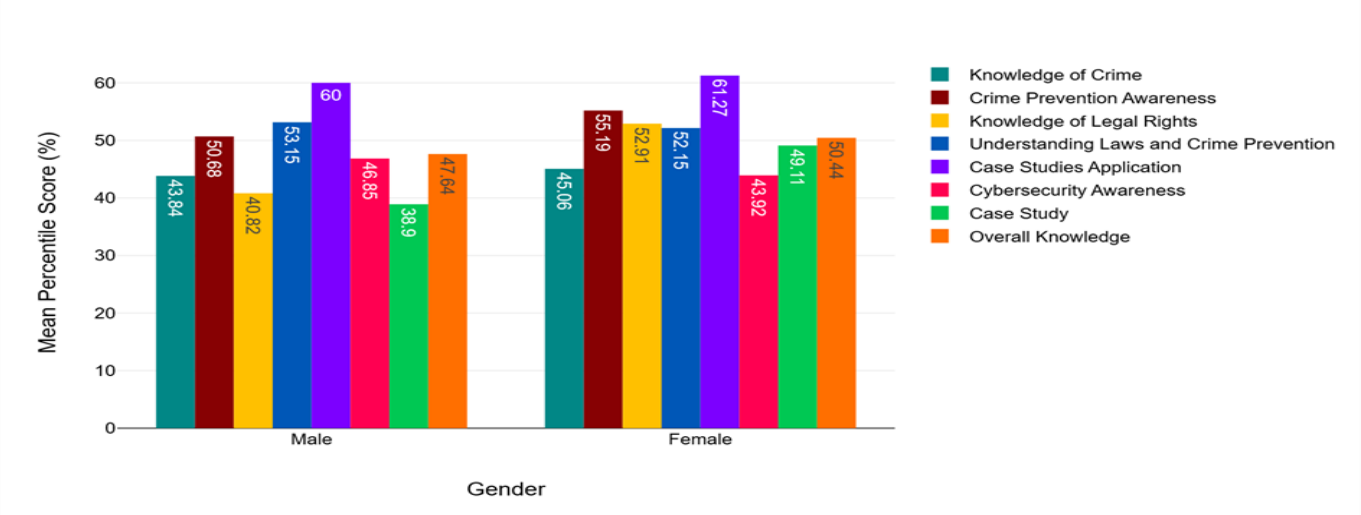
**Table 10:** Mann–Whitney U Test Results Comparing Knowledge Scores between High School and Higher Secondary Students

| Variable | Mean Rank (HS) | Mean Rank (HSS) | U | Z | p | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge of Crime | 68.46 | 79.99 | 2068 | -1.53 | 0.125 | ns |
| Crime Prevention Awareness | 77.77 | 75.95 | 2379.5 | -0.26 | 0.798 | ns |
| Knowledge of Legal Rights | 78.55 | 75.61 | 2343.5 | -0.39 | 0.695 | ns |
| Understanding Laws and Crime Prevention | 78.12 | 75.8 | 2363.5 | -0.34 | 0.738 | ns |
| Case Studies Application | 75.59 | 76.9 | 2396 | -0.18 | 0.859 | ns |
| Cybersecurity Awareness | 73.02 | 78.01 | 2278 | -0.65 | 0.515 | ns |
| Case Study | 64.76 | 81.59 | 1898 | -2.22 | 0.026 | * |
| Note. HS = High School (n = 46), HSS = Higher Secondary (n = 106). | | | | | | |
| p values: *p < .05 = *; ns = not significant. | | | | | | |

The Mann–Whitney U test results revealed no statistically significant differences between High School and Higher Secondary students across most knowledge domains. The mean rank values were similar between groups for Knowledge of Crime (68.46 vs. 79.99), Crime Prevention Awareness (77.77 vs. 75.95), Knowledge of Legal Rights (78.55 vs. 75.61), Understanding Laws and Crime Prevention (78.12 vs. 75.80), Case Studies Application (75.59 vs. 76.90), and Cybersecurity Awareness (73.02 vs. 78.01), with all corresponding p-values exceeding .05. A statistically significant difference was observed in Case Study performance, U = 1898, z = –2.22, p = .026, where Higher Secondary students (Mean Rank = 81.59) outperformed High School students (Mean Rank = 64.76). This suggests that students at the higher academic level may possess more developed analytical and application skills when interpreting practical legal scenarios.

The results indicate that course level (High School vs. Higher Secondary) did not significantly impact students' knowledge across most domains, including crime knowledge, legal rights, crime prevention, understanding laws, case study application, and cybersecurity awareness. However, the analysis revealed a significant difference in Case Study scores, with respondents at the Higher Secondary level outperforming those at the High School level. This finding suggests that respondents at a higher academic stage may have more developed analytical and application skills, enabling them to approach real-world legal scenarios more effectively.

**Figure 2:** Gender-Wise Mean Percentile Scores across Crime and Legal Awareness Areas



### *4.9. Comparison of Knowledge Scores by Gender*

Table 11. and Figure 2. show that Mann–Whitney U tests were conducted to examine gender differences in respondents' scores across various knowledge areas. The Mann–Whitney U test results indicated no statistically significant gender differences in most knowledge domains, including Knowledge of Crime (Mean Rank: Female = 77.19, Male = 75.75, p = .836), Crime Prevention Awareness (Female = 82.50, Male = 70.01, p = .057), Understanding Laws and Crime Prevention (Female = 74.97, Male = 78.16, p = .617), Case Studies Application (Female = 78.27, Male = 74.59, p = .589), and Cybersecurity Awareness (Female = 73.23, Male = 80.04, p = .333). Significant differences were observed in Knowledge of Legal Rights (U = 1989.5, z = –3.42, p = .001) and Case Study performance (U = 2225.5, z = –2.49, p = .013), with female students achieving higher mean ranks than their male counterparts.

**Table 11:** Mann–Whitney U Test Results Comparing Knowledge Scores between Female and Male Students (N = 152)

| Variable | Mean Rank (F) | Mean Rank (M) | U | Z | p | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge of Crime | 77.19 | 75.75 | 2829 | -0.21 | 0.836 | ns |
| Crime Prevention Awareness | 82.5 | 70.01 | 2409.5 | -1.9 | 0.057 | ns |
| Knowledge of Legal Rights | 87.82 | 64.25 | 1989.5 | -3.42 | 0.001 | ** |
| Understanding Laws & Crime Prevention | 74.97 | 78.16 | 2762.5 | -0.5 | 0.617 | ns |
| Case Studies Application | 78.27 | 74.59 | 2744 | -0.54 | 0.589 | ns |
| Cybersecurity Awareness | 73.23 | 80.04 | 2625 | -0.97 | 0.333 | ns |
| Case Study | 84.83 | 67.49 | 2225.5 | -2.49 | 0.013 | * |
| Note. F = Female (n = 79), M = Male (n = 73). | | | | | | |
| p values: **p < .01 = **; *p < .05 = *; ns = not significant. | | | | | | |

The results from Table 11. and Figure 2. Suggest that gender differences were not statistically significant across most knowledge dimensions, including crime knowledge, prevention awareness, and understanding of laws, case application, and cybersecurity awareness. However, female respondents performed significantly better than male respondents in two key areas, knowledge of legal rights and case study performance. This suggests that female respondents may have a stronger understanding of their rights and more developed analytical or problem-solving skills when working through practical legal scenarios.

## 5. Conclusion

This study reveals that, while students in Aizawl demonstrate strengths in cybersecurity awareness and scenario-based applications, their foundational knowledge of crime, legal rights, and preventive laws remains limited. The findings underscore the need to integrate structured crime and cybersecurity education into school curricula, emphasising core legal concepts and critical thinking skills. Providing targeted support for male students and other low-performing groups, along with peer mentoring and increased parental involvement, could further improve learning outcomes. Considering the study's limited sample size and reliance on convenience sampling, future research should aim to comprise larger and more diverse populations and evaluate the effectiveness of educational interventions across different regions. Such initiatives are essential for cultivating informed, legally aware, and responsible citizens.

## Declarations

### *Author Contributions*

C. Vanlalpeki, as part of her master's dissertation, contributed by conceptualising the study, designing the methodology, collecting field data, writing the literature review, and entering data for analysis. Juliet F. Lalzarzoliani supervised the study, providing guidance on the research design, overseeing all stages of the project, and conducting the data analysis.

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### *Conflict of Interest*

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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